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# The **P**ALIMPSEST

APRIL 1926

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THE EDITOR

PUBLISHED MONTHLY AT IOWA CITY BY  
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA



## THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

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## THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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## Wisaka

Wisaka is the culture hero of the Sac Indians. He is human in appearance — the son of the virgin daughter of Masakomigokwa, old Grandmother Earth. Almost all of the customs of the people were taught to them by Wisaka. After preparing the earth for mankind and teaching people how to live, he withdrew to the North where he now abides. Some day he will return and deliver his uncles and aunts, the Indians, from the yoke of the white man.

The adventures of a culture hero constitute the great fundamental religious myth of all the north central Algonquian Indians, including the Pottawatamie, Menominee, Kickapoo, Sac, and Fox tribes. His name and exploits vary among the different tribes, but the essential phases of the hero cycle invariably appear in Algonquian lore and tradition. The Sac versions of these legends have been recorded by Isaac Galland and Alanson Skinner.



In the beginning, Getci Munito, the Great Spirit, a white-haired old man of majestic mien who sits smoking in the heavens everlastingly, created the world by putting islands in the sea. The earth is the grandmother of everything that breathes, and her name is Masakomigokwa. The roots and herbs are the hairs of her head.

Now it happened that the world was originally inhabited by innumerable supernatural beings. The Aiyamwoy were giants that lived in the sea and were possessed of evil purpose. Monstrous snakes, whose leader was Mahshekenapek, the great horned serpent, and fierce submarine panthers, the Nampeshiwuk, dwelt everywhere in waterfalls, in dismal swamps, in the sea, and under the sea. The panthers had spotted bodies like wildcats, and tails of immense length. In the western empyrean lived giant eagles, the Thunderers called Nenemikiwuk, who were gods of war and rain and from whose eyes the lightning flashed. They constantly preyed upon the serpents with thunderbolts. That is why snakes are not desired about the lodge, because lightning often strikes places where they lurk.

After Getci Munito created the earth he took up some yellow clay like wax and molded in his hand the image of a human being. Then he blew his breath upon it four times and it came to life. So it was that the Sac Indians came into being. The Foxes were made of red earth.

For a long time Grandmother Earth lived in



the world alone. Then, in some mysterious way, a daughter was born to her. The Menominee say that one day Masakomigokwa heard a noise under a wooden bowl. When she turned the dish up there appeared a little daughter who grew up at once into a woman. In due time she became the mother of Wisaka, whom Getci Munito sent in human form to govern the land and teach mankind how to live. After his mother died he dwelt with his grandmother who reared him.

When he was yet a youth he began to fulfill his mission as the friend of man. It was he who stole fire for the Indians, so that they were no longer cold or lonesome; and it was also Wisaka, the hero, who discovered the sweet smoke of tobacco one autumn in Indian summer and captured it for the use and comfort of his uncles and aunts, the Indians. As it was his duty to destroy the enemies of man, he roamed over the earth, killing a great many snakes because they were the incarnation of evil spirits, the embodiment of powers of the underworld.

By the time Wisaka was full grown the Aiyamwoy had overrun both the earth and the sea, threatening mankind with extinction. Resenting the culture hero's control over all creatures, the giants united with the monsters whose habitations were under the sea to make war against Wisaka and his people. But they were afraid, so they summoned a great council to assemble upon the earth. When this vast meeting of Aiyamwoy and undersea creatures had



convened, after long debate and consultation, they resolved to prepare a great feast and invite Wisaka to it that they might there ensnare him and put him to death.

But when the deliberations of the council were concluded and a messenger had been appointed to carry their invitation to Wisaka, behold! his younger brother, who was called Yapata, was discovered in their midst. The whole assembly was thrown into confusion by perceiving that their stratagem was exposed.

"Where is thy brother, Wisaka?" they demanded.

"I know not", he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Thereupon the council, being sorely vexed, rushed upon Yapata and slew him.

According to another version in Sac mythology, the underworld serpents invited Grandmother Earth to their meeting.

"Your eldest grandson is abusing us so that we want to destroy him in some way", they told her.

"It is useless to try it", answered the old woman. "Wisaka is immortal. Yet maybe you have power to kill his younger brother."

So in revenge the serpents planned to put an end to Wisaka's younger brother, Yapata. They challenged Wisaka to race with a three-year-old buffalo around Lake Michigan. As soon as the contestants had reached the opposite shore, the serpents attacked Yapata. Even where he was, Wisaka



could hear his younger brother crying for assistance. It seemed to him that Yapata had called, "Oh, my elder brother, they are killing me!"

Wisaka ran all the faster, and as he drew near home, he passed the buffalo. Still he ran faster, and as he came nearer he could hear Yapata calling distinctly, "Oh, my elder brother, Wisaka, they are killing me!" But when Wisaka arrived it was too late. They had already killed his brother and skinned him and carried the skin away.

Now when Wisaka learned of the murder of Yapata he was extremely sorrowful. He blackened his face and mourned for ten days. After the tenth day the gods sent his dead brother to the wigwam where Wisaka lay weeping.

"Here am I, my elder brother!" cried Yapata. "Let me in!"

"No", responded Wisaka, "I can not admit you!"

Again Yapata begged, "Let me in, my elder brother!"

"No", answered Wisaka, "I can not admit you."

Still his younger brother besought him. "Admit me, Wisaka." And still the elder brother refused him entrance.

Then for the fourth time Yapata pleaded, "Let me in, oh elder brother!"

This time Wisaka responded: "It can not be, my younger brother, I must not let you in, but here is a little drum and here is a sacred whistle. Go west through the heavens to the other world where the



dancing ground of the dead is located. Every time you beat your drum our uncles and aunts will come to you."

Yapata took the whistle and blew upon it, and struck his drum. Lo, at once there were five or six souls of newly dead persons standing beside him. These accompanied him on his journey over the Milky Way to the Hereafter in the west where Yapata still rules.

Thus death came to mankind, and resurrection of the body was prohibited. Before entering Heaven all Sacs must cross a river which is guarded by Pokitapawa, old Knocks-a-hole-in-the-head. A watch dog barks alarm whenever a new soul approaches, and Pokitapawa tries to dash out the brains of the fleeting spirit. If he succeeds, the soul is lost forever. But if the passing soul is swift and eludes Pokitapawa it darts across the log over the river to the abode of the dead, where there is everlasting feasting and rejoicing.

When the Nenemikiwuk, who lived above the clouds, heard Wisaka wailing in sorrow as if chanting a war song, they formed a league with him to avenge the blood of his lost brother. Meanwhile, the sea serpents and panthers had fled to their natural habitations beneath the sea, leaving the Aiyamwoy alone to defend themselves against Wisaka and his allies. The scene of the battle where the hero fought the giants was in a flame of fire. The whole race of Aiyamwoy was destroyed with great slaughter



so that not one remained living upon the face of the earth.

When the horrible sea creatures learned the dreadful fate which had befallen their friends, the Aiyamwoy, whom they had deserted, they were much afraid, and cried aloud for help. Papoanatessa, hearing of their distress, swept over the earth with frost, snow, hail, ice, and north wind. The waters of every river, lake, and sea became solid ice and the whole surface of the earth was covered with an immense sheet of ice and snow. Thus the first inhabitants of the earth — men, beasts, and gods — all perished, except a few choice ones of each species which Wisaka managed to preserve with himself.

Again the monsters of the sea came forth upon the earth, and, observing that Wisaka was almost alone, they rejoiced in the hope of being able to destroy him and take possession of his country. But all their schemes were in vain, because Wisaka knew their plans as soon as they were formed. At last, in despair, the evil powers became mad and resolved to ruin the whole face of the earth which they desired so much to inhabit, for they determined if they could not enjoy it themselves that they would make it unfit for the habitation of others. So they retired beneath the sea again and implored the gods of rain, the Nenemikiwuk, to drown the whole surface of the earth with a flood. The Thunderers heard their war song and listened to their entreaties. Calling upon the clouds to gather, a tremendous deluge was



poured down until the whole surface of the earth, even the top of the highest mountain, was covered with water.

But Wisaka, seeing the clouds gather and the rain descend, took some air and made a huge bubble, called Opeskwe. Into this he betook himself and with him all sorts of living animals and man. As the water rose, Opeskwe was lifted up and floated upon the surface. After they had remained for a long time on the flood with no sight of land, Wisaka commanded the tortoise to dive to the bottom of the water and bring up some earth. But the tortoise never returned. Again and again other animals tried to obtain some earth, but their efforts were unsuccessful and many lives were lost. Finally the muskrat dove down and at length was seen floating on the surface. Though the faithful creature was dead, still upon careful examination some earth was found in his mouth and claws. With this soil Wisaka formed a new earth, spreading the island upon the surface of the watery waste. When he had finished he went forth and with him went also all of the creatures that were in Opeskwe. Together they occupied the dry land.

As a final resort the evil powers appealed to Getci Munito for advice. It was upon his suggestion that they decided to initiate Wisaka into the Medicine Lodge. Thereupon they set to work to build a Mitawigan and sent the hawk to call Wisaka.

Three times the hawk carried the invitation to



Wisaka, but he refused to look up. When the hawk appeared for the fourth time, he raised his head and inquired, "What do they want me for?"

"Getci Munito sends for you", replied the hawk.

Thereupon Wisaka arose and followed the hawk to the Mitawigan. The door was opened for him and he went in.

The lodge, which was long and low, was so situated that the ends where the doors were located faced east and west. In the northeast corner sat Getci Munito, and Wisaka was given a seat on his right, with his back against a bur oak pole. The Great Spirit himself conducted the ceremonies.

Now all the Munitowuk, or Spirits, were called into the Mitawigan — except the Nenemikiwuk, who were not invited. Even the black bear and the grizzly bear were there. Then Wisaka was instructed in the rites of the Medicine Lodge and invited to return four days later to be fully initiated.

At the appointed time Wisaka went to the Mitawigan where the manitous were gathered. All kinds of serpents and beasts had been invited. The drum was placed in the northeast corner of the lodge before Getci Munito and the guests were seated on his right beginning with Wisaka. When all was in readiness the Great Spirit began the ceremony, and the culture hero was admitted to the mysteries of the Medicine Lodge. Thus Wisaka obtained for mankind the secrets of long life on earth and the resurrection of the spirit.



One day after the deluge Wisaka assembled all the people, the ancestors of the Sac Indians, and divided them into two groups. One he called the Okemawuk, or chieftains, which was composed of six clans — the Paukauhaumoi, Sturgeon, Eagle, Great Sea, Bear, and Thunder. To them he entrusted the care and keeping of the holy mishaman, or sacred bundles, which were to be carried with them everywhere and transmitted from fathers to their eldest sons through all generations. The second band was composed of Mamishiwuk, or servants, and they were also divided into six clans — the Water, Deer, Bearpotato, Turkey, Wolf, and Fox. Priests and attendants at feasts and ceremonies were to be chosen only from this group who were not to be regarded as servants to the Okemawuk.

Wisaka then ordered the people to give sacrifices and feasts in his memory and to the Great Spirit, and instructed them minutely in the method of conducting the ceremonies. A Sac brave who desired to observe the sacred rites, he ordained, should first provide a clean animal for his feast; then he should send his women and children out of the wickiup and call in the priests, one of whom should be dispatched to invite a few clansmen to the celebration. When the priest had killed the victim for the sacrifice and had prepared the feast, the one observing the custom should bring forth his sacred bundle and open it in the presence of his companions. Thereupon the sacrifice was to be brought in and laid before the misham,



some incense (tobacco) taken from the misham was to be divided into five parcels which were to be tied one to each leg of the victim and one to the neck, and thus adorned and appropriately painted the sacrifice should be placed before the fire until the close of the feast. The master of the feast should then take some incense from the misham and cast it into the feast fire to make a sweet savory perfume. He should also make two holes in the earth, one at each end of the feast fire, and, having placed in them fire and tobacco to make the earth smoke, he should address the Great Spirit thus:

“Oh, thou who hast made all things, both upon the earth and in the sea, and also under the sea, it is unto thee that I have fasted and cried; the trees of the forest have witnessed my sorrow and affliction; and I trust that the mountain's echo has borne my supplications to thine ears. This feast which I have prepared is in memory of thee and Wisaka; accept therefore, in this victim, my best beast, the animal most admired by me, the especial favorite of my family. In offering it unto thee in sacrifice, I follow the ordinance of Wisaka. Grant me this favor, that I may live long upon the earth. Make me strong in the day of battle, and cause the terror of my face to spread confusion in the ranks, and dismay and trembling through the hearts of my enemies. Give me, in dreams, a true and faithful warning of every approaching danger, and guard me against the evils to come.”



Then, according to the decree of Wisaka, the master should begin the feast with song and, when the meat was cooked and the guests present, each with his own dish, he should order the festive animal served in equal portions, except that the head should be given to the guest esteemed to be the most valiant. When the guests had been served and the food had cooled, the master of the feast should give a signal to begin eating as fast as possible. Meanwhile the sacred song of the clan should be sung. The bones that remained were to be cast into the fire or a stream of running water. After the feast, one of the guests should address the company, saying:

“To all who are here assembled to participate in the commemoration of Wisaka around this sacred food: know ye, that it is the good will and pleasure of Wisaka that we should in this manner celebrate his memory and observe his holy ordinance. Our worthy entertainer, in whose lodge we have just now feasted, and who is our brother, has opened in our presence his most holy misham, and he and his companions have sung in our ears the delightful sacred song of his forefathers, which has been handed down from generation to generation, since the days of Wisaka, to our present respected brother.

“In this most holy misham are not only the symbols of all our sacred songs, but it also contains all the necessary rules for the government of our lives and regulation of our conduct. Our duties to Munitokusha, and to each other, are herein represented



by signs prepared by Wisaka himself, and which have been collected from the purest and most wonderful portions of the whole creation. Remember, therefore, to teach your children faithfully to observe all things which are taught by the sacred symbols of this holy misham, that Munitokusha may look on us with pleasure, and prosper our journey in the path of life."

The sacrifice victim was then to be carried beyond the limits of the village and hung facing the east upon a tree or pole coated with red clay. The ordinance of the feast and sacrifice having been accomplished, each man should then return to his own lodge.

After Wisaka had proclaimed the ritual of the feast sacrifice he delivered to the head man of each clan of the Okemawuk a sacred misham and charged them in these words:

"Keep this in memory of grey antiquity. This holy depository contains the symbolic memorials of Wisaka, his history of the earth, and his commands to the human race. In this sacred repository you shall find the signs which represent all your duties to Munitokusha, your obligations to each other and a confident promise, which will assure you of prosperity in this life, and happiness and glory beyond the dark forest of that river which you must cross soon after death. If you will have a due respect to the teachings of these sacred symbols, and strictly observe the sacred ordinances, and do them; then



you shall retain the vigor of youth even to old age; you shall increase in the land, and your multitudes shall cover the whole earth. You shall eat the fat beasts of the forest, the fish of the waters and the fowls of the air; and you shall be clothed with warm garments of wool and fur skins. Your young men shall return victorious from the battle; your young women shall come in at evenings loaded with the rich fruits of the earth; and at night young children shall rejoice in the dance. You shall be clothed with strength all the days of your lives; your faces shall be a terror to your enemies, and in the battle they shall not be able to stand before you. Your lives shall be prolonged upon the earth; and when you die, you shall pass joyfully over that horrid mountain and awful river which separates this earth from the spirit home. And you shall be in no danger of falling into that gloomy gulf where the wicked and disobedient are punished; but with rejoicing you shall join your ancestors (who observed these ordinances), in that happy land where pleasures and glory are prepared for you, of which you can now form no correct estimate, and where sorrows and afflictions never shall come."

Wisaka next proceeded to open the sacred bundle and explain the significance of the articles it contained. Each amulet, medicine pouch, or other object, he announced, was the holy sign of a divine commandment of the Great Spirit. Taking up one of the articles, he said, "This is the representative



of the first ordinance, which is: In thy youth thou shalt observe a fast unto Munitokusha, every day, until twenty winters have passed over you." Presenting another symbol, he said, "Secondly — When the twenty winters of infancy and youth have passed away, and ye have arrived to manhood, ye shall leave the lodge and separate thyself from all society, going forth alone into the forest, and abstaining from all food. Thou shalt also black thy face and lie down upon the ground, and cause the trees of the forest, the mountains and the rocks to respond to the voice of thy lament; and in this manner thou shalt continue thy fast for the term of ten days and nights. In about ten days and nights, or sooner, Munitokusha will visit ye in a dream, and show ye what his will is, and what he requires ye to do. Then thou shalt arise and return to thy lodge, wash thy face and partake of food; thou shalt also make a feast according to the ordinance of the feast and sacrifice; and at the feast thou shalt relate to thy companions and guests, all things which were shown to thee in thy dreams. The old men and chiefs will then explain to thee thy dreams, and instruct thee in thy duty, whether to go out against the enemy or to forbear."

Thus Wisaka continued to proclaim the commandments of the Great Spirit for the conduct of his children, the Indians. Sacred rules for personal cleanliness, honesty, generosity to the poor, vengeance upon an enemy, and the christening of chil-



dren were duly ordained. The meaning of everything he explained until every one possessed understanding.

At last, having subdued the evil powers in the world, having secured fire, tobacco, and other comforts for man, and having taught people how to live and pray, Wisaka withdrew to the North where he still resides, watching over the welfare of his uncles and aunts. Some day, they say, he will return.

JOHN ELY BRIGGS



## That Good Old Man

I couldn't tell you just when that was (said James Knox). That was a good many years ago; it was the year the chintz bugs was. I sowed forty-two acres of grain; and I threshed seventy-six bushels. The threshers wouldn't run the rest of it through the machine, for it wouldn't pay 'em, it turned out so poor.

I drewed the grain to Clermont (he continued) and got forty cents a bushel for it. It was twenty miles; ten from where I lived to West Union, and ten from there to Clermont. So the whole trip there and back was forty miles.

I was owing for my place. William Larrabee had bought the mortgage from the man I had give it to. Why, I remember it so well! It was such a thing I never could forget it! He done me such a favor!

When I went in to see Mr. Larrabee, he asked me what he could do for me. I was trembling so's I couldn't hardly shake hands. I told him he had some notes I'd signed; and he looked and found 'em. I told him just how it was; that I couldn't pay anything, and I'd come down to see what was going to be done about it — what he was calculating to do with me.

"It's pretty hard for me to tell what I will be doing," he answered me. "I don't know what to do



with a man that'll come to see me and not try to dodge me", said he.

While he was looking at the notes he asked me: "Did you know that these notes are drawing ten per cent?"

"Yes sir." I said, "but I had to pay that in order to get my place."

"Isn't that pretty high interest?" he asked me then.

"Well, it does seem so to me," I said.

He took his pen and drewed it right through the ten per cent, and wrote eight in place of it.

"Now that will help you some, Mr. Knox, and you can go home and you needn't lose any sleep over it. I'll carry you till you can pay."

And then he asked me whether I had enough to live on. I believe he meant to give me that if I'd needed it to get through. I told him I believed I had enough to carry me so long as I didn't have to pay him what was due. I couldn't hardly wait till I'd get home to tell the woman what luck I'd had. That good old man!

Next year I happened to have good luck and paid him everything. When we shook hands and said good-bye I told him that if it ever came in my way to do anything for him I'd help him all I could.

A few years later when he was running for Governor I went down to Randalia early in the morning on election day. Some of them made the remark that he was a "money shark".



I told my story and just let 'em know what he'd done for me. I got some votes for him. They said if he was that kind of a man they'd vote for him. I stayed all day; you could electioneer them days.

I guess (interposed Mrs. Knox) if Mr. Larrabee or any of his family were running for office, Mr. Knox and all his family would work for them.

I was down to Clermont (resumed Mr. Knox) and I went to that schoolhouse he built. His picture was hanging there, and I looked at it, and I tell you the tears was a-falling. That good old man! I can't never forget what he done for me.

DANIEL M. PARKER



## Wanted—A Servant Girl

The above title does not refer to the attempt of a modern housewife to obtain the services of a maid. Rather it points backward some eighty-six years to an obscure incident revealed by a notice published without explanation or comment in a Dubuque County history.

“Notice. — Ran away from the subscriber on the 22nd inst. a servant girl about eleven years of age; had on a small figured blue calico dress, short black hair and black eyes. I hereby caution persons against harboring or trusting her, under penalty of the law, as I will enforce it against anyone to the uttermost extent.

Du Buque, Jan. 25, 1840

Charles Swift.”

Who was this eleven year old girl and why, in the middle of a northern Iowa winter, did she leave her place of employment? Where had she gone or with whom was she staying? Was she white or colored? All these questions may be asked, but there is no answer in the county history. The notice is merely quoted and the reader is left to use his imagination concerning the fate of the child or to search the records for further information — which probably could not be found.

There are other questions, however, less personal,



which are suggested by this notice. What right had the "subscriber" to this girl? It is evident from the language used that she was neither his daughter nor his ward, and the only other relation in Iowa which would give him a claim to her would have been that of master and apprentice or indentured servant.

This relation was originally derived from the trade and craft organizations of the Middle Ages, but by 1840, especially on the frontier, it had largely lost its importance as a system of industrial training and had become a method of caring for dependent children without expense to the public. A minor so "bound out" or apprenticed was obliged to serve the master until the expiration of the term of service. Theoretically such an apprentice occupied much the same relation to the master that a child did to its father except in the matter of inheritance, but actually many of them were merely unpaid drudges, protected by law against cruel treatment but for the most part unaware of this protection and entirely without the opportunity of invoking such protection even if aware of it.

If this eleven year old servant girl was such an apprentice, then her master had a legal right to her services, whatever they were. And this raises another question. If a boy or girl thus bound to service refused to work as provided for in the articles of indenture, what could the master do about it? Since corporal punishment was then in vogue it was quite likely that most masters found no difficulty in



enforcing their claims unless the child escaped altogether.

But the Iowa law at this time contained definite provisions concerning truant servants. A runaway apprentice might be arrested and brought before a magistrate who, if the servant persisted in refusing to work for the master, might "commit him or her to the jail of the proper county, there to remain until he or she be contented and will serve as an apprentice or servant according to the intent and meaning of this act." Just what facilities there were in the hewed-log jail at Dubuque for the imprisonment of an eleven year old girl we do not know, but having the legal right of a parent as to control and chastisement it is not likely that the master in this case would have asked aid of the law.

His difficulty, if he knew where the girl was, lay in another direction. One can scarcely imagine that this child had left her master unless some older person had aided and assisted her. His threat to prosecute to the "uttermost extent" any person who harbored or assisted her suggests another difficulty of the delinquent or fugitive apprentice. According to the Common Law, which at that time largely governed in Iowa, any person who hired or retained a runaway servant, after receiving notice that the servant had left his rightful master, was liable to that master for damages. "The reason and foundation upon which all this doctrine is built", says Blackstone, "seem to be the property that every man



has in the services of his domestics''. From which it appears that the eleven year old girl was "property", the right to which was protected by law.

And so this girl, with her blue calico dress, her bobbed black hair, and her black eyes, was a fugitive from the law as well as from her master, if it may be assumed that she was his apprenticed servant. One would like to turn to the back of the book to see how she fared and what became of her, but unfortunately the story is unwritten — only the notice and the yellowed pages of the old laws remain.

RUTH A. GALLAHER



## Washed Loyal

"They say Lincoln has been shot. I hope to God it's true and I hope my brother shot him!"

Uttered to-day in Mason City these words would be serious enough. But on April 18, 1865, such a declaration was little short of a match in a powder barrel. Almost every home in the village of Mason City had been touched by the grim hand of war. Weary but hopeful, in common with the North, the people of the little Iowa community were looking to Abraham Lincoln as the one man in the world who could make their sacrifices of avail.

Four years before, when the President first called for volunteers, Mason City had responded. Muddy streets had been churned to an even deeper mire by the passage of men bound for the training camps. In midsummer some of the most active men in the struggling pioneer community marched away with Captain D. E. Coon to join the Second Iowa Cavalry.

Since that day repeated appeals of "Father Abraham" for men to maintain the Union had met with instant responses. Farewells that were never to be followed by glad welcomes had been said. Yet faith in the great leader had never faltered, and when that faith had been justified at last by victory, love for the tall, sorrowful man in Washington had become intensified.



Spread wide over the prairie yet firmly unified by a common purpose and common hardships, the frontier town was longing for the final adjustment between the North and South that would allow its men to return. Only the boys, the physically unfit, and the old men were left at home. For nearly four years progress had been arrested. There was work to be done in conquering the prairie, a new season was just beginning, and hope of speedy release from the army seemed to depend upon Lincoln.

Then came the terrible news that the President had been shot. The stagecoach had scarcely arrived before the sad tidings had spread all over the town. With bated breath people spoke of the tragedy. Up and down the rutted streets neighbor talked to neighbor of the national calamity. More than once the fear was voiced that four years of bloody war and unmeasured sacrifice might be wasted.

At the Eureka House, a hostelry and stage relay at that time, men and women gathered to discuss the meager details. Could the news be really true? What insane motive had prompted the murder? How had the assassin escaped? Who was involved in the plot? In the midst of such conjecture while the people of Mason City were stunned and saddened, Mary Rogan spoke her bitter words of rejoicing in the assassination of President Lincoln. But her treasonable remark fell upon ears that were not attuned to such a refrain. Colonel I. R. Kirk, a veteran of the Spanish-American War, still living in Mason City,



is one of the few persons who remembers the occasion and the exciting events which followed.

Feeling ran high in the village. As during the World War, utterances inimical to the government were dangerous to their authors. But young Mary Rogan, good looking and buxom, was in the habit of speaking her mind. She didn't like Lincoln and never did believe he was half the man so many thought him. With Southern relations and sympathies, she was somewhat out of place in a community as strong in its Northern leanings as Mason City. Being employed at the Eureka House, she was well known and her disloyal attitude had been suspected for some time.

But her avowed pleasure in Lincoln's death and wish that her brother had perpetrated the awful deed fell as a bomb among those who heard her comment. From one to another the news of the statement sped over the city. Little groups formed on the street — formed, spoke earnestly, and dissolved to form other groups. The story spread like wild-fire among the five or six hundred inhabitants of the town. Women with brothers, sons, sweethearts, and fathers in the Union army thought of their nights of sorrow and their days of endless waiting for word from the front. The long fight under Lincoln for the ideals he held fundamental to the welfare of the country, and their dependence on him, came home to them. And their righteous indignation mounted.

That night Mary Rogan walked up the street from



her work, conscious of her conspicuous situation, but with her head held high. She seemed as one who knew herself to be in the minority, and glad of it.

By evening the women were so wrought up over the vicious words that they felt something had to be done. "Let's duck her!" suggested someone. Instantly the idea met with approval. Gathering recruits as they went, the women moved toward the home of Miss Rogan. There was no levity among them. A grimness of purpose that boded ill for the intended victim was plainly marked on their faces.

At the Kirk home, the crowd stopped. Mrs. Elizabeth Kirk, a leader among the women of the city, was called to the door. As they told her what was contemplated, Ike Kirk, then only fourteen years old, edged boy-like into the doorway behind his mother to see what the excitement was all about.

Mrs. Kirk, with two sons in Southern hospitals and one in a soldier's grave in Louisiana, immediately consented to join the militant women. At the suggestion of one of them, the lad put on one of his mother's dresses and followed, ready to lend a hand in case his sturdy strength should be needed.

Fifteen or twenty women were in the crowd when it reached Mary Rogan's residence, situated where the Stott home now stands, on the corner of Fifth Street and Delaware Avenue north. Without ceremony the leaders entered the house and led Mary out. A slight protest on her part was immediately stilled when she felt the firm grip of many hands



upon her arms and garments. Thus she was hustled along. Down what was then Main Street they went, using the unpaved roadway in preference to the narrow board walk, a crowd of twenty-five or thirty women by that time, with the victim walking defiantly in the center of the group.

Gradually the silent grimness of purpose broke down her resistance and suddenly she screamed in terror, begging to escape the fate that awaited her. According to the story of the happening in the *Cerro Gordo Republican*, a Mason City newspaper, "she was being hurried off in the direction of Willow Creek, when the unsuspecting men in different parts of the town were apprised by her screams and vociferations that something was in the wind, but starting for the 'front' they were informed that their presence was not needed."

At that time there was no bridge over Willow Creek on Main Street, for the creek was easily fordable except in time of high water. Up stream from the ford, however, there was a comparatively deep pool. It was there the women led their prisoner. Ike Kirk followed along, as he had been told to do, but by the time the women reached the creek, nearly everybody in town had joined the jostling crowd of spectators that lined the bank above the water.

A slight struggle ensued. Firm and willing hands were laid on the woman. Suddenly she was picked up bodily and with a splash she went into the water. A second and a third time she was submerged while



the crowd on the bank stood looking on in silence. Ludicrous as the performance may seem now, it was wholly serious then.

“My husband is fighting rebels south and we will attend to them here”, remarked a soldier’s wife. And the newspaper reported another woman as saying “that they would not allow rebels to live in Mason City.” The women of that community were serving notice to the world that they had nothing but condemnation for any disloyalty to the principles for which their men-folk had fought, and that aid and comfort to the enemy were not to emanate from their midst.

Finally the drenched woman gaspingly retracted. She “begged pardon for what she had said and sacredly promised forever to be a good Union woman from that time forward, under all circumstances. They blacked her face and would have sheared her head had she not earnestly entreated them not to do so, promising to be loyal.” Thereupon the women, “after administering to her the oath of allegiance, formed in procession and marched up Main Street, singing”. They were met by the men, “who cheered them lustily, joined in the procession and escorted them to McMillin’s store, where candies were passed to the crowd.”

At this juncture W. E. Thompson, a former sailor and minister, “was called out by the ladies for a speech and responded, briefly referring to the unhappy circumstances which had called them together,



complimenting them for their loyalty, and making some very touching remarks concerning the death of the President and the nation's affliction; after which the crowd marched to the Eureka House, where they sang The Star Spangled Banner and Rally 'Round the Flag, and then dispersed."

It is only fair to Mary Rogan to add that she kept her word. Sometime later she married a Union veteran named James Jenkinson and lived to be respected in the community that had administered her baptism of loyalty.

R. A. PATTON



## Comment by the Editor

### THE SPIRITUAL TRIUMPH OF THE INDIAN

For more than three hundred and fifty years, Indians and white men fought for the possession of North America. Not that pitched battle was waged incessantly, but two hostile races struggled relentlessly to the tragic end. The white man took the land, but the spiritual victory was won by the Indian. Singly, or with wife and children, the pioneers penetrated into the vast American forest. There generation after generation, the spell of untamed nature awakened dim, fleeting impressions of primeval human experience. The delicate tracery of leafy branches overhead, the illimitable woodland murmur, the ghostly shimmer of the moonlit glades, the sense of encompassing power to be mastered single-handed might have made mystics of the whole western race — as the wilderness did affect Lincoln. But the ever-present danger of sharp and sudden death from a hissing Indian arrow banished soulful meditation and turned the thoughts of men to physical self-preservation, to matter-of-fact reality. Like an undammed flood the overwhelming great white tide emerged from the forest and swept out over the prairies. Long before their last desperate resistance on the plains, the red men were doomed.



A Hindu would consider the defeat of the Indians inevitable, because they were the more spiritual people. And so they were. Cruel, treacherous, dirty — yes; but spiritual nevertheless. To them, as a people, the spirit was real. Sun, moon, stars, earth, sea, wind, cold, life, and death were all expressions of the omnipotent, universal Presence. Good and evil spirits were thought to dwell in rivers and hills, in beasts, birds, trees, and herbs. They deified both animate and inanimate objects, and for each curious phenomenon of nature they devised a fabulous explanation. Infinitely rich in symbolism and mystic conception, Indian mythology possessed contemporary meaning and application. The legends of the culture hero, incorporated in the ritual of tribal customs, were a part of their very life. Unlike imaginary Mount Olympus beyond the clouds, the spiritual resources of the Indians were visible. According to Neihardt,

They turned to One who, mightier than Man,  
Could help them most — the Spirit in the Sun;  
For whatsoever wonder-work is done  
Upon the needy earth, he does it all.  
For him the whole world sickens in the fall  
When streams cease singing and the skies go gray  
And trees and bushes weep their leaves away  
In hopeless hushes empty of the bird.

J. E. B.



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